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SUBJECT: Suggestions for Defamation of Religion in the UN

REF: A) STATE 128320; B) MANAGUA 1127; C) MANAGUA 1123  
D) MANAGUA 599; E) USUN NEW YORK 1133

CLASSIFIED BY: RobertJCallahan, Ambassador, State, Embassy Managua;  
REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (C) President Daniel Ortega's government generally votes against the U.S. position in the United Nations, and in 2008 voted against the U.S. position in the important issues as described in the Department's "Voting Practices in the United Nations 2008." As noted in ref E, Nicaragua (along with Cuba and Venezuela) "have aligned themselves with the most radical states in the UN ... [and] have become among the most vociferous anti-American delegations in the organization." Regarding the defamation of religion issue, the Ortega Administration has voted in opposition to the U.S. position since 2007 in the Third Committee, the Human Rights Council, and the UNGA plenary. In the latest demarche delivered to the Foreign Ministry on the issue, the Director for the Americas noted that given Nicaragua's voting record under President Daniel Ortega, it is likely Nicaragua would vote against the U.S. position (ref C).

¶2. (C) In general, direct USG engagement with the Government of Nicaragua regarding votes in the UN has not proven successful and at times has proven counterproductive. The Ortega administration also has not proven susceptible to international pressure - e.g., it has withstood pressure regarding the 2008 municipal election fraud although it has cost it financial assistance from the United States and Europe (ref D). Moreover, the Ortega administration has not proven responsive to the concerns of human rights organizations or others outside the governing Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN). Given the government's attitude toward the United States in the UN generally, and on the defamation of religion issue specifically, we recommend engaging the Government of Nicaragua through other Latin American countries such as Argentina, Brazil or Chile. These countries are likely to hold more sway with Nicaragua, and the Ortega administration is more likely to follow them on this debate.

CALLAHAN